

1. New Treating Specialty Codes for VA Nursing Home Care Unit Admissions

VHA Directive 2005-061, "VA Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU) Admission Criteria, Service Codes, and Discharge Criteria," was issued December 7, 2005. The directive specifies treating specialty codes that must be implemented effective March 31, 2006. The new codes associate service categories (e.g., rehabilitation) with admission categories (e.g., short-term stay). The directive is available on the Internet at <http://www1.va.gov/geriatricsshg/docs/VA-NHCU.pdf>.

2. Means Test Thresholds for Calendar Year 2006

VHA Directive 2005-064, dated December 22, 2005, revises the Means Test Thresholds, Medicare Deductible Rate, and Child Income Exclusion for calendar year 2006. For full details, see http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1363.

3. VHA Directive Redefines Policy for Provider Classification

VHA Directive 2005-059, "Person Class File Taxonomy," was issued December 7, 2005. The directive describes the required classification of VHA providers using Person Class codes in VistA. It explains the taxonomy developed by the American National Standards Institute and the Health Care Financing Administration (now Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services) and adopted by the VHA. The directive is available on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1355.

4. National Clinical Reminder for OIF/OEF Screening Revised

VHA Directive 2005-055, "Implementation of the National Clinical Reminder for Afghan and Iraq Post-Deployment Screening," issued December 1, 2005, describes the required use of a national clinical reminder to ensure screening by VHA providers of patients identifying themselves as returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom. The directive is available on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1346.

5. HERC Issues Technical Report on Fee Basis Data

The Health Economics Resource Center (HERC) has issued *HERC Technical Report #18, Fee Basis Data: A Guide for Researchers*. The report describes the eight Fee Basis SAS files produced each year and gives the names and file locations of all Fee Basis variables for FY2004. The report is available on the VA Intranet at http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov/files/RPRT_304.pdf.

6. New Issue of DSS Newsletter Available

The December-January issues of *DSS Matters* has been released. The issue is especially useful for researchers new to the Decision Support System (DSS), with background information on "Why DSS?" and descriptions of numerous pre-defined reports (e.g., "Pharmacy Workload and Cost by Major Drug Classes"). *DSS Matters* can be accessed on the VA Intranet at http://vaww.dss.med.va.gov/news/ne_newsletter.asp.

7. New Issues of Data Warehouse / Data Marts Newsletter Available

The January issue of the Data Warehouses / Data Marts newsletter includes updates on various programs, such as the Meta Data Registry, Clinical Data Warehouse, VISN Support Services Center, and Health Data Repository. The newsletter is on the VA Intranet at <http://vaww.va.gov/VHAEA/scripts/dwdm.asp>.

8. Micro-Cost Methods for Determining VA Healthcare Costs Updated

The Health Economics Resource Center (HERC) has issued a December 2005 revision of its *Micro-Cost Methods for Determining VA Healthcare Costs*, replacing the October 2004 issue of the guidebook. Revisions include new information on the National Prosthetics Patient Database, new information on the PAID personnel data system, and new and updated citations. The guide is available on the Internet at http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov/files/BOOK_160.pdf.

9. VIREC Presentations at HSR&D National Meeting

The following presentations by VIREC staff will be made at the National HSR&D 2006 meeting.

- Workshop: *Clinical Decision Support Systems: The Iterative Process of Design*
Browning MM; Hynes DM; Goldstein MK; Daniels D; Cohen AN; Young AS; Doebling BN
- Workshop: *New VIREC Tools for Researchers Using VA Data*
Murphy, P; Arnold, N; Koelling K; Mohr, T
- Oral presentation (concurrent paper session): *Death, where is thy record? Death Ascertainment for Veterans*
Arnold NL; Sohn M; Hynes DM; Maynard C
- Oral Presentation: *Transition to the new race/ethnicity data collection standards in the Department of Veterans Affairs*
Sohn, MW; Zhang H; Arnold N; Stroupe K; Taylor B; Wilt T; Hynes D
- Breakfast Session: *VA Information Resource Center (VIREC)*
Stevens, JM; Mallin, K. (and other VIREC staff)

The detailed agenda is available on the Internet at

http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/about/national_meeting/2006/agenda.cfm.

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